

Because that in the following Discourse the Reason is Recited and Answered, why my Ministry is Rejected and not Received by this Ignorant, but more especially Corrupt World; therefore I thought it Expedient and Necessary to Publish the same.

EZEKIEL ii. v.

*And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a Rebellious House) yet shall know that there hath been a Prophet among them.*

**I**F we could now know and discern, as we shall know and discern (*In the latter Daies ye shall consider it perfectly*) when we shall be actually carried forth from Time to Eternity, then we should have other kind of Thoughts concerning the Things of God; then we have in this Life, and on this Earth. *Who shall ascend into Heaven? That is, to bring Christ down from above, Or who shall descend into the Deep? That is, to bring up Christ again from the Dead: But what saith it? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth and in thy Heart, that is, the Word of Faith which we Preach.* The Word of Faith will in a manner do all this, that is, bring down things out of Heaven that they are made known unto us, all one as the things of this Earth. This *Word of Faith*, makes invisible things to be in a manner visible, and things Future to be Present unto us. Of this sort are the whole Scriptures of God, which contain an *Orderly Declaration of things which are most surely believed among us.* So that they are the *Word of Faith* which we Preach. The Scripture doth chiefly speak of things which are yet to come, and will be fulfilled after that we are gone off from the Stage of  
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this Earth, and we shall find it so upon the reflection and remembrance.

Of this sort is the Text I have here chosen, which partly speaks of things Present, and partly of things to come. *And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.* Hereby their Proof and Trial is had as to this present Time: for this denotes forth their present kind of Demeanour and Behaviour hereupon. But by that Phrase, *Yet shall know,* The particle *shall,* is an Adverb of Futurity; and by what is further expressed on, *That there hath been a Prophet among them,* is shewn forth a Recollection, that so it hath been, which they were not aware off, and did not altogether so clearly discern then.

The Reason of my choosing this Text to Discourse on here, is to this effect, Inasmuch as I have been a Preacher unto the People of this my Generation and Nation for several Years last past, and as yet my Ministry hath been Rejected and not Received amongst them; whereupon I am forced to make this, or the like return, *That I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, Isa. 65. 2. I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my work is with the Lord, and my judgment with my God, Isa. 49. 4.* As for every Sin there is some seeming excuse, so for their not hearing the Word of the Lord at my Mouth, There hath been such an imagination in the Minds of People. To speak out those *Thoughts of Heart,* it seems to be to this purpose, *As some did contend with Peter that he went in to Men Uncircumcised and did eat with them, Acts 11. 3.* So the people of this Nation have heard a certain kind of Rumour or Report, That I have Written and Spoken sundry things in behalf of a Papist; and inasmuch as Popery is not the truth as it is in Jesus (as indeed it is not, which I do hereby acknowledge as much as themselves) From hence they would Fallaciously and Falsly Reason and Conclude, That I have not Taught, nor yet as long as I retain these Principles, *do I teach the way of God in truth.* And therefore it is that they turn their backs, and they refuse to hear the Word of the Lord Preached by me. If

If in all this, I have not been unfaithfull to God, nor yet in handling his Word, *Neither have we dealt falsly in thy Covenant; Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way,* Psal. 44. 17. 18. But I have affirmed his Word and Commandment only in the same manner as they stand Recorded in the *Book of the Lord*: Then those non Hearers are convinced out of the Law as Transgressors; for refusal or neglect to hear the Word of God, is Sin and Transgression. It seems very strange, That those who seem to Preach and Talk very much against Sin; yet themselves in this matter, give way unto, and are guilty thereof. But it is no new or unusual thing, that some speak against Sin in the general, and yet at the very same time, themselves are guilty of the same in the particular Nature hereof.

True it is, that Popery is made up of Idolatry, Superstition and Errour. But yet we are in no wise allowed by the Christian Religion, which doth command, *That ye resist not evil, Mat. 5. 39. Recompence to no Man* ( and if so, it ought not to be done to a Papist ) *Evil for Evil. Be not overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with good, Rom. 12. 17, 21.* So that it is not true and uncorrupt Religion, but contrary to it, To Murder, Rob, or do any Evil or Wrong unto a Papist. Unless People are become altogether ignorant and dull of Apprehension, It is a most easie thing to be conceived and understood, That a Man may be no Papist, and yet do no Evil or Wrong unto a Papist. Agreeable hereunto is the Will and Commandment of the most High God, who doth not esteem Papists to be worse than Idolaters, Strangers, Heathen or Publicans of Old. As to them, God declares himself and his Will to be on this manner, *I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against false Swearers, and against those that turn aside the Stranger from his right, Mal. 3. 5.* Such is the Revealed Will of God. And moreover, it is the same Robbery and Injustice in the

Nature of things, to dispossess or spoil a Papist, as any other Person.

What I have Written in behalf of a Papist, did amount to no more then this, That meerly or so far only as he was a Papist, he ought not to have been turned aside from his Right; which I grounded from *Mal.* 3, 5. aforecited: And also from *Lam.* 3. 35, 36. *To turn aside the Right of a Man before the Face of the Most High, To subvert a Man in his cause, the Lord approveth not.* Which is as plain a Declaration of the Mind and Will of God, as any thing in the World can be; and altogether as plain and self-evident as that maxim is, *Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto ye, do ye even so to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.* In this place of the Lamentations it being said, *Man*, indefinitely, it extends equally and all one, to Sinner as to Saint, to *Gentile* as well as to the *Jew*, to Bond or Free, yea to all of the Race and Lineage of Mankind; *To turn aside the Right of any Man whatsoever, or to subvert any Man whatsoever in his cause the Lord approveth not.* So that, if herein I have only delivered and made known the truth as it is in the Scriptures of God, then also it is the truth as it is in *Iesus*, for *Iesus* is the Word of God: Then I say, That *when the Dead small and great shall stand before God, I shall have boldness in that Day, when I shall at the Bar of his Judgment Seat, implead the People of this my Generation and Nation, for their not hearing or not receiving that part of the Word of God which was committed to my Ministrations; and themselves may meet with fear, shame and confusion of Face, when they are called to give an Account for the same; then also shall they know who did forbear, That there hath been a Prophet among them.*

They are in our Text called *Rebellious* who did forbear; for so many things in the Scriptures of God are spoken forth against them who are non hearers or who refuse to hear his Word. *Seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee, Psal. 50. 17. This evil people which refuse to hear my words, Jer. 13. 10.*

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Yea, there is much more said against them then those Cautions are against *Deceivers*, or *Take heed what ye hear*. Where again it is observable, That we are not forbid to hear but intimation is rather given, That we should hear, as well as *prove all things*; for how could we *Prove* them, unless we did first hear and know them. We ought to *Take heed what we hear*, that is, Examine and Prove well what we do hear. Seeing that these things are so, I admire, how any who pretend to have the real fear of God, can or do turn their backs upon the Preaching of his Word.

Such who *forbear* and refuse to Hear, Read, or Receive it, would have the Word of God ( which like its Author, is without *Uariableness* or *Shadow of turning* ) to be fashioned and modelled according to their own Imaginations and Lusts. Which same Imaginations and Lusts of Men are different from, and contrary unto the Word of God. A manifest Evidence that there is a spreading and prevailing Corruption, Transgression and Iniquity in this Nation; because that the multitude of People is so very much zealous for it; for the multitude have been all along, for what is either contrary unto, or different from the Law and Revealed Will of God. *Even from the days of your Fathers ye are gone away from mine Ordinances, and have not kept them*, Mal. 3. 7. This Word *Ordinance*, doth denote an established and fixed Order of things according as God hath appointed them. And here it is witnessed and affirmed, That in the several Generations and Countries, the People have varied from, and have *not kept them*. Now there is more credit to be given unto the affirmation of the Word of God ( that being a forerunner of his future Judgment ) then to all the Uindications and Hypocritical Pretences of the People themselves, that they have not gone away from his Ordinances, when indeed they have; or then indeed is to be had to all the sayings, of Bishops, Doctors, or Preachers, the Priests and People themselves, *Who Rob Father or Mother, and say it is no Transgression*; Prov. 28.

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24. When indeed it is a Transgression. And so it will clearly appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ, when another Scene and Face of things will be seen over what is now; then they *which justify themselves before Men, and who are highly esteemed amongst Men will be a-bomination in the sight of God*, Luke 16. 15. And on the other hand, that solid, sincere, unaffected Piety, that universal Zeal for God, and for all his Commandments indefinitely without exception, not keeping some and neglecting others, as the manner of many is at this Day, but an actual observance of all them, not *breaking the least Commandment*, Mat. 5. 19. For any specious end or pretence whatever, although this be now spoken against, and reproached by Men, who are the Transgressors, will yet be commended and accepted by God.

In all probability and likelihood, the Stream and Multitude of the Jewish People, did run against *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babylon*, with as much Zeal, Heat, and Enmity: As we have seen and known the greater part of the Inhabitants thereof, do hate him that was King over this Nation, and for these twelve Years last past, *They would not have him Reign over them*, Luke 19. 14. And that for the same Reason: For as our People feared that such a one would Conquer and Enslave them after *French* Methods, and compel them to Popery. So peradventure the Antient *Jews* might have secret indignation and hatred against *Nebuchadnezzar*, because he had made a Conquest over them; for this belongs to Conquerors, to be inwardly and secretly hated, though they are outwardly feared. And also because this *Nebuchadnezzar* was an Heathen, an Idolater and a Stranger; and as it was *Not lawful for a Man that was a Jew to keep company with any other Nation*, so they did conceive, and keep up unkindness and hatred against them. Notwithstanding this mind of the Jewish Nation; yet *Ezekiel* a true Prophet of the Lord in his seventeenth Chapter, doth speak fundry thing, in behalf of the King of *Babylon*, according to humane Apprehension; whereas in Truth he speaks, for the

*Oath and Covenant of God, which the Jewish Nation had taken unto him. So that here it might have been Objected and Upbraided unto Ezekiel, What dost thou go about to destroy the Worship of God, which at that day was among the Jews, and to bring in the Heathenish customs? Inasmuch as thou wouldst have us retain our subjection unto an Heathen King, and not rebell against him, as we have done: Nevertheless the Prophet Ezekiel doth there speak sundry things against their Rebellion: Nay, It is not so much Ezekiel, as the Spirit of God God which spake by him, who knows best what is his own Laws, and what is pleasing in his Sight. Seek ye out of the Book of the Lord, and read; for therein it is written, That we should have our Conversation honest among the Gentiles; least the Name of the Lord should be Blasphemed, and the way of Truth evil spoken of amongst them: That we should carry our selves wisely towards them that are without. Recompence to no Man evil for evil, Provide things honest in the sight of all Men: Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Now seeing that our God hath given such and such Commandments, and many more to the same purpose, as may be seen in the Old and New Testament; here to allude unto that saying of Peter, in Acts 11. 17. What are we the Ministers and Preachers of his Word, that we should withstand God? Or that we should vary from his Word and Commandment? Or that we should be silent so as not to make mention of this Word and Commandment of the Lord, because that it will displease the People, in that they have lately acted contrary thereunto. Far be it from me, and let my Tongue cleave to the Roof of my Mouth, if ever I should be a Mencepleaser after this manner. For if I yet pleased Men, I should not be the servant of Christ. By his Grace and Assistance, and invisible Protection, I will go on, and proceed to behave my self truly in his Covenant, that is, to speak out and assert the Commandments of God, exactly in the very same manner as they are: However my Ministry is Received or Rejected by the Multitude; or whether I do bear the Scorn and Reproofs*



of the High and Mighty People, as *David* himself witnesseth he did, whose example herein I am conformed unto. I am determined through Christ that ~~strengtheneth~~ me, to follow the Lamb, who is the Word, and the Word is God, and so the conducts and leadings of Divine Truth, *Whether soever it goes*, whether I have many or few hearers; for herein God will be more glorified; and hereby I shall give a good and right Account of my Ministry.

It hath been the way and method of Satan, in the several Generations and Countries; and so he continues to do at this Day, that where he sees and discerns (for he is both a knowing and discerning Spirit) that such a ones Ministry would do more good; than others; or that *God hath anointed* such a particular Creature of his with the Oyl of gladness above his fellows; There Satan the Enemy will labour and endeavour some way or other to puzzle and perplex his Ministry, so as to render it either of none, or if that is not possible, yet of less effect. And though what is of God, will stand in spite of Men or Devils; and the same will be received nevertheless, by some of the Servants of God: Yet many others in such a time of Temptation and Trial, will fall and go utterly away. For Example whereof, we may have recourse unto the History of the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles; whose Writings and sayings do abundantly shew forth and manifest the Reproaches and perverse Usage of the People concerning them. Of our Lord and Saviour himself, *Being made better then the Angels*; Heb. 1. 4. And greater then all the Prophets, yet we thus read, *He is despised and rejected of Men*; he is despised and we esteemed him not, Isa. 53. 3. And yet in him was the words of our Text literally fulfilled. *And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious House) yet shall know that there hath been a Prophet among them.* Even that Prophet of whom God by Moses spoke, *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their Brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.* Yet in

in the Days of his Flesh, some of the People of that Generation did hear Christ, and others again did forbear and not hear him. Who Reproached him for a Deceiver, Mat. 27. 63. *And many of them said, he hath a Devil, and is mad, Why hear ye him?* Joh. 1c. 25. And yet some of the very same Persons, after they had Crucified and Put him to Death, then they did confess and acknowledge, *Now the Centurion and those that were with him (even those People who had Reproached, Persecuted and Rejected him) watching Jesus, saw the Earthquake, and those things that were done they feared greatly; saying, truly this was the Son of God.* After that they had crucified the Lord Jesus, then they did know, and own him to have been a Prophet; yea the very Son of God. And so it was with the other Prophets, after they had Persecuted and Slain them; and after they had finished their Testimony and Ministry, or after that they were Dead; then the People could Remember and look back, that such an one was a Prophet or an eminent Servant of the Lord. *Lo, when this is come to pass, then shall it be known that there hath been a Prophet among them.*

The foolish and absurd Nature of Men, doth more prize and esteem of things by their want, then by the having them. Like as we value Health in the time of Sicknes: So such a precious Jewel as a sound, faithful understanding Ministry, which is Health and Life to our Souls, which feeds them with Knowledge and Understanding; even this is more esteemed when it is lost then when had and enjoyed. Like as in the time of Samuel, *The Word of the Lord was precious, in those Days there was no open vision.* So when a thing is common, or present, or easily had, then also it is apt to be refused and not esteemed off: But when the same is past by and irrecoverable, then they; wish for and desire it.

Another Reason why those eminent Instruments of the Glory of God, in their several Generations, were rejected by the People thereof; because they did Preach and Teach what did vehemently and violently contradict

tradict the Lusts and Will of Men; and they would not endure that, but keep unto their own Lusts still; and thereupon they Reproached, Rejected and evil-treated the *Servants of the most High God, who did teach the way of Salvation.* There is somewhat of this in all, even the worst and most disobedient of Men: They have some Sense and Apprehension of the Great God over all, and they fain would be at Peace and Reconciliation with him; for as he doth good, so he can punish and make miserable, as is evident to the most Ungodly and Ignorant, by that Sickness and Death which he sends upon the Children of Men; And therefore, though they have Transgressed, and do still go aside from the way of his Commandments: They would so have it, as if God had given no such Commandments at all. Like the question of the Serpent (by whose Temptation they are still acted) *Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every Tree in the Garden?* By which he would cunningly suggest and instil into their Minds, as if God had not said so: Even so a Thought doth arise in the Hearts of the Disobedient, as if God had given no such Commandments. But when his faithful Ministers do affirm that he hath, then they seem to be *Setters forth of strange Doctrins*, and to *Bring some new things to their ears.* Hence there are that *Raise up strife and contention*, Hab. 1. 3. For these *Ungodly Men walking after their own Lusts* will strive and contend against such who Preach the Word and Commandment of God, against their Ungodliness and Lusts. Therefore as it is in the following words, *The Law is slack'd*, ver. 4. When it is either forgotten or broken by them.

If we look back unto the particular History of the Prophets and Apostles, we shall find that the Reproaches and evil Entreaty of the People against them did arise for this very cause. What a stir was there against *Paul*, made by *Demetrius* and his fellow Crafts Men, when he Preached against the Idolatry of the People of *Athens*; and so he mentions that he was evil intreated at *Philippi* for the Like Reason. The  
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Inhabitants of both Places did imagine that they did Please, Atone and Worship the Great God of the World, by those their Idolatrous and Superstitious Rites and Customs : But when the Apostle did from the Spirit of the most High God, contradict them therein, then the *Heathen were in a rage*, by having heard that heretofore themselves followed a *vain thing*. The Doctrine of the Apostle *Paul* as to this matter, is exactly fitted and applyed against these their false Imaginations. *God that made the World, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of Heaven and Earth, dwelleth not in Temples made with hands, neither is Worshipped with Mens hands as though he needed any thing, seeing that he giveth to all Life and Breath and all things. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the God-head is like unto Gold and Silver, or Stone graven by art and Mans device.* Now Preaching and Publishing hath that Effect, that some do believe, receive and obey the things Spoken or Published, others do kick against them ; as it is said in the same Chapter, that they mocked at the following Doctrine of this same Apostle.

It is a work of an hard Nature to strive against the Lusts, long received customs, established Rites and Habits of Men : For custom is a second Nature, and when People have been long used to a thing, you had almost as good tear or pluck away one of their Limbs, as go about to remove or perswade People off from it. *Can a Leopard change his Spots, or an Ethiopian his Skin ? So may they do well, who have been accustomed to do evil.* That is, it is very hard and difficult. Nevertheless if that same custom be evil or vain ; then as the same God did Create the outward Man ; so in the second or New Creation of him, which is called the New Birth, or Regeneration ( which signifies a being born again ) the Grace of God will perswade off from, and get rid of that same evil or vain Custom. *Saith the same Apostle, If after the manner of Men I have fought with Beasts at Ephesus.* Now Beasts will ( what lieth in them, unless they be broken off from it )  
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unto their Lusts, and to their Customs; and so long as Men are of the same Mind, they are after the manner of Beasts: Like as a Carriers Horse will go on in its wonted way; so *The brutish among the People* are for doing still (though it be evil or false) what they have been used and accustomed unto; for such are led by Sense and Memory, and not by Reason or Judgment. Now Faith is an higher and more sublime Principle of Action, which carries above all these: And where the Man doth live by Faith, and act by Faith, then *He puts away childish things*, 1 Cor. 13. 11. Then he puts away the inferiour Principles; by which others, and perhaps himself formerly did Act and Live. And now he is acted by Faith only. Whereby he becomes somewhat above and beyond a Man, as Reason Advances above a Beast; *For Flesh and Blood doth not reveal these things unto him.*

*The just shall live by his Faith*, Hab. 2. 4. Which is a great and observable Scripture, in that it is thrice quoted by the Apostle Paul; and it is written for our Instruction and Admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. To lead and bring People over unto this Noble and Divine State of Living by Faith, is the end of all our Writing Books and Preaching Sermons. But the generality of Mankind hath been so long Settled upon the lees, and sunk down into Earthlinefs, Sense and the things of this Life, that they are not so easily and soon raised up to this Spiritual frame of Mind, which if obtained, would influence all their Actions. There is that in the Hearts of Natural Unregenerate People, and also that remainder of Corruption, and of the old Nature, even in the Regenerate; that these last do grow weary of, and the others do strive against the Heavenly seed of true Doctrine. There is a reluctancy in the former, and an awkwardness in the latter. And as it is written, *There was War in Heaven, Michal with his Angels fought with the Dragon and his Angels.* So hence doth arise War in the Soul of Man: Christ Jesus, with the words he puts into the Heart, doth fight with the Devil and his



his Suggestions, and also with what Temptations arise from the Flesh, and from the things of this World; and accordingly as one prevails or the other, so is the Man determined to Good or Evil, Truth or Falshood, Right or Wrong.

*There is a way which seemeth right in a Mans own eyes, but the paths thereof lead unto Death.* And as God hath made our Nature with a strong bent and tendency to the thing that right is; so even in our backslidings and goings aside, we do not commonly any thing that is wrong, but under a shew and outward appearance of right. *The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service,* John 16. 2. Said Jesus to his Disciples, and that was committing a grievous Sin, even Murther it self. Yet however strange it may seem, yet so it is, that People are so infatuated and deluded as to think that they did serve and obey God, whilst they were acting a thing contrary to his Laws. This confirms what was afore observed, That People think that they do keep the Commandments of God, even whilst they break and transgress them, and they faine would have it so as if they had not sinned. An Example hereof may be seen in the History of the fall of Adam. *Now the Serpent was made more subtil then any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made: And he said unto the Woman; yea hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the Garden,* Gen. 3. 1. By which he would cunningly insinuate in the first place, as if God had given no such Commandment; which yet was so evident to their Hearts and Consciences, That the Serpent himself could not well gain-say and deny it, as appears by the Answer of the Woman, in ver. 2. 3. Whereupon the Serpent did reply in ver. 4. 5. And frame another kind of Temptation; unto which the Man and Woman do unhappily yeild. But then it being added, *And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.* By their Eyes being opened, may be at first supposed, as if their Condition was not hereupon become worse but better for the present: For so it seems, where those who heretofore were

were blind or Blear-eyed do see, Here again it may be perceived, from the following Verse : There was also in them, a secret consciouſness that they had offended God; for it was this which made them hide *Themselves from the presence of the Lord God, among the trees of the Garden.* From all which considered together, this true Observation may be gathered, That though Satan would suggest unto Sinners and Transgressors; as if God had given no Commandment against what he tempts unto; yet nevertheless, after they have committed the same, there is a consciouſness, and full conviction within them, that they have also herein done somewhat to offend and displease God; which is also sensible unto themselves, by that guilt which doth appear forth upon their inward parts, and by that fear which they labour under.

In every instance of Transgression before the fact is committed, *A deceived Heart doth turn them aside:* And so it is afterwards, *The deceived Heart* doth continue and hinder them from coming to Repentance. Sin doth cast a Cloud over the understanding, which doth hinder the influence of the *Sun of Righteousness*, and deprives of the knowledge of things Divine. Remarkable is that of *Daniel 12:10.* *Many shall be purified and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.* Hence it is, *even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient,* 1 Pet. 2. 8. That People are so puzzled and perplexed at the works and doings of God. *We have sinned with our Fathers, we have committed iniquity, and done wickedly,* Psal. 106. 6. And what is the consequent of that, may be seen in the next verse. *Our Fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt.* Therefore it was because they had sinned and done wickedly, and committed iniquity. This is the very Reason why People do understand so very little according to truth of the Works and Doings of God; for God will not manifest himself unto the Soul which is defiled with Sin, Iniquity or Filthiness. And so if People were alike Obedient to the Word of our Ministry, and if they would

would come to hear it (for their refusal do that is one Act of their Disobedience) then they would be satisfied and convinced of our Truth, Sincerity and Uprightness therein: Even that we do *Not handle the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending our selves to every Mans Conscience in the sight of God,* 2 Cor. 4. 2. And that we do speak out the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, not making less of it, nor concealing any part of it; as the manner of most Preachers and Teachers is, least they displease their hearers. *If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self,* John 7. 17. So on the other hand from what is written, *That we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth,* Dan. 9. 13. We may learn and gather, that the only way to come to the knowledge of the things of God, is by Obedience and keeping his Commandments: As contrariwise it is only because of their Sin, Iniquity and Transgressions, that any do remain in ignorance and darkness.

As David saith by the Spirit, *Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my Soul,* Psal. 66. 16. So we (both Ministers and hearers) are allowed, yea in Duty we ought to declare and make known our several Experiences between God and our Souls; that if the same be good, they may be for the edifying and instructing one another; or if they be evil and failings, then it is for the warning of each other, that we may all see the Rock, whereon our Souls, or the Souls of others, had almost been Shipwrecked; or the place and stumbling Block, whereat our steps had well nigh slipped: Or if any of the Ministers of God lie under Reproaches and false Censures (as my present Case is) then we may *Rehearse the matter from the beginning and expound it by order unto the people,* Acts 11. 4. We have Examples hereof in the Apostles, *Peter and Paul*; whose second Epistle to the Corinthians, is chiefly made up of Apologies and Vindications of himself, from false Calumnies and Reports. We may find the like in the other Prophets, Ministers and Servants of God.

And

*And the Rebuke of his people he shall take away from off all the Earth, Isa. 25. 8.* So in the mean while he is well pleased, that according to the Knowledge, Understanding and Truth he hath given them, they should do it themselves.

In misunderstandings between Minister and People, and so between Man and Man, there is most commonly some fault on both sides; So it is here, besides the Sin and Ignorance, Perverseness, Stubbornness, Contempt and Disobedience to Gods Word and Commandment, which is in the People of this Generation and Nation: I cannot say neither, *That I have made my Heart clean*; or that I am wholly without fault or blame. Though here to enter in my Protestation, *In all that hath come upon us, I have not forgotten God, nor behaved my self falsely in his Covenant.* When I taught and affirmed constantly, that it was his Commandment and revealed Will, *I will be a swift witness against false swearers and against them that turn aside the stranger from his right, Mal. 3. 5.* Yet in the bearing forth and suffering for that Testimony, I gave way to so many things, which did favour of Men, and of the fleshly corrupt Nature that was in me, that the work was spoiled and mismanaged by me: That even several of his Saints and Servants were ready to imagine and conclude, that there was nothing at all of God in it. *When I was numbered among the transgressors, Isa. 53. 12.* Blessed be God for conforming me therein to the example of Jesus Christ our Lord; and I was put into Prison, yea into the same place with real Criminals, who were there justly, *for they received the due reward of their deeds, Luke 23. 40, 41.* But I had done nothing amiss as to that matter; yet I was foolishly, falsely, and ignorantly dealt withal and proceeded against, as a breaker of Mans Laws; forsooth only because I did exhort them to keep and to do according to the Laws of God; and yet still *Let it be done according to the Law, Ezra. 10. 3.* And I had admonished them of the breach and violation thereof, in order to bring them again unto his Law and into the way of his Commandments. I did nothing

thing more, or beyond, or besides this. But for me to be used as a Transgressor for this doing, by them who in truth were the Transgressors themselves, this was strange Sottishness and Ignorance in my Persecutors and Oppressors, *who did seek after my Soul, they have not set God before them, Selah. Psal. 54. 3.*

Whilst I was in Prison I thought That God should do somewhat more for my Deliverance (yea, sometimes a vain Imagination did arise, That it should be in a manner extraordinary by way of Miracle) then he did for my fellow Prisoners. For I thought it hard; yea, an horrible Suggestion did peep forth, and was just perceived in my Mind, as if it would be Unrighteousness in God if he should suffer me to be plagued and holden like other Men; But blessed be his Name, it was not so with me; For he hath been with me in five Troubles, and hath delivered us from so great a Death, and doth deliver: *In whom we trust that he will yet deliver us, 2 Cor. 1. 10.* And he caused the Enemy to intreat me well in the time of Evil: For in every Prison or House of Confinement I was in, I had more favour and kindness shewed unto me, then any other Prisoner. But as to the former part of this Thought of mine, a seasonable Answer did recur to my Mind, on this wise, *viz,* If thou wouldst have God do more for thee then for other People in seeming like outward Condition, then thou shouldest see well to it, and endeavour that Thou, even thou, dost exceed and go beyond those my fellow Creatures and Brethren in Godliness and Holiness, and by a greater Zeal for the Name and Glory of God; and by a greater Diligence and Labour to Promote and Propagate his Religion and Truth in the World; Through and by thy Sufferings, *To bring many Sons and Daughters unto Glory.* And if God should restore unto thee the joy of his Salvation, and uphold thee with his free Spirit, then to make the right inference and Practice afterwards, *Then will I teach Transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee, Ps. 51. 12, 13.* For I should be alike Zealous and Earnest for all the other Commandments, as for those particularly for which I Suffered; And so I should have reprov'd all



manner of Sin and Transgression, even in all People, *From the greatest to the least*: And so in the meanest all one as in the highest; as I did reprove the Sin and Transgression of the Rich and Mighty People; for which my doing, they threw me into Bonds and laid Persecution on my Loins.

*Holiness unto the Lord*, and Obedience to all his Commandments, is what God indispensably expects and requires from all his Servants and Creatures. But he looks for higher Degrees and a greater Measure thereof in his Prophets, unto whom he *Reveals his Secret*, and brings them *near to himself*. For so it should be done by *the Man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee*, Psal. 65. 4. and whom Almighty God doth delight to Honour. The Psalmist Pronounces such an one *Blessed*. For certainly the more Godly, or the more Devoted and given up to God, any one is, he will have the more Peace and Comfort in this Life, and be the more Happy and Blessed throughout all Eternity. In the visible Church of God in the several Generations and Countries, There have been all along Observed to have been those of the *Devouter sort*; and so there was amongst the Philosophers or Professors of Philosophy, a stricter sort then the generality of the rest. And truly it is this Devouter sort and *Stricter sect of Religion* (I mention this to all that shall Hear or Read these Words, to quicken and exhort them unto the utmost Preciseness and *Circumspect walking*) who when *The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*, They do also thus take it by force. We Read that when the Lord was to descend upon Mount *Sinah*; or when *Moses* was to deliver any extraordinary Message from God unto the People, or the People were to meet with God; Then the People were to Sanctify, Purify and Prepare themselves four Days before hand, and not to come near their Wives. And what these did for a set Time, his Prophets and especial Servants did throughout the general Course of their Life. That is, in the Things pertaining to God, they did somewhat *more than others*, Mat. 5. 47. For they were much more Godly than the common standard and size of Religion as it was then in the World.

But

But here *I will speak of mine own Infirmities*; Instead of my being more Holy and Sanctified than others; instead of my being *harmless and undefiled, and separated from sinners*: And whereas I should have exceeded the rest of my Brethren in Godliness (considering what kind of Testimony I bore forth, and I suffered for) yet contrariwise I fell into a Worldly kind and manner of Life, and did retain the vain and foolish things of Pride, and the Fashion of this World; all which was in no wise agreeable, but contrary unto the Spirit of the Antient Prophets. Good God! How much did I herein fall off and go aside from his *High and Heavenly Calling*? This shews, and hereby it may be discerned and seen, how easy it is for the *Things which savour of Men*, and of the fleshly corrupt Nature, and of the Pride of Life to creep in and intermingle with the best and most Divine Works. Now there was a day, when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them, Job 1. 6. Even so in the most Divine Things, somewhat of the Devil, the World and the Flesh, will come in and mingle therewith. The best Men have most Temptations, and the best Works meet with the most Opposition, which would endeavour to defeat and spoil it. And so when I was employed in a *Noble matter, wholly a right work* (to allude unto Jer. 2, 11.) I did not then so carefully and watchfully see to it, as in duty I ought to have done, least I should omit or be guilty of somewhat which would render it of none, or of less effect: But through my neglect and failure herein (I wish I could speak it *Weeping*) Satan got an Advantage over me, as to serve his own Pestilent Destructive Ends, in Letting, Hindring and Resisting of Good.

I had need to take up a great Lamentation as to my self, even *To Weep with the Weeping of Jazer, Jer. 48. 32.* As I Remember from whence I am fallen. And I should herein Repent and do the first works. As I Recollect and can apprehend how very much I am now fallen short of what I was Originally Created unto. I have often heard a secret and still Voice speaking unto my Spirit, like that in the Prophet. *O Israel thou art my Servant, in whom I will be glorified.* And so it hath seemed to me; As if

Almighty God had called me by my expresse outward Name *O RICHARD STAFFORD*, Thou art my Servant and Creature, in whom I will be glorified. Truly this is a great word, and belongs to every Inhabitant throughout the whole Earth, whether Male or Female, Bond or Free, High or Low, Rich or Poor, they are all and severally the Servants or Creatures of God, in whom he will be Glorified. That is, either in their Salvation or Condemnation. *The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the Wicked for the day of Evil*, Prov. 16. 4. The Servants of God are such who obey him and keep his Commandments, and do the Things which please him: In these he is glorified to their own Good and Comfors. But those again may be more properly stiled the Creatures of God than his Servants, who live at random, and in forgetfulness of their Maker; and in these also he will be glorified to their own Evil and Punishment

*In that day there shall be upon the Bells of the Horses, Ho-liness unto the Lord*, Zech. 14. 20. So it should be written upon the Fore-head of each of us; and it should be engraven upon the Tables of our Heart; so that it may be continually in our Mind and Remembrance. O Man or Woman, calling Him or Her by their respective Names, Thou art my Servant, in whom the invisible God will be glorified. As this following is a nearer and more honourable Relation. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty* 2Cor. 6. 17. 18. Even so it is here, it is a better and more comfortable Diversity for the Lord Almighty to say unto us, Thou art my Servant in whom I will be glorified; then if he should only say, Thou art my Creature in whom I will be glorified. *For his Servants shall serve him*, Rev. 22. 3. But amidst the Common and Promiscuous multitude of Mankind, There are many Rebels and Enemies, in whom he will be glorified though it be to their Destruction.

*And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will*

*will not do them ; for with their mouth they shew much love but their heart goeth after covetousness, Ezek. 33. 31. And so by the outward posture of People, and by their coming to the publick places of his Worship they make a shew of much Honour, Reverence and Obedience unto God ; but their Heart goeth after their own Pleasure or Profit. They are still for doing their own Will, and for going after their own Thoughts. They will sit a Sermon out ; but after it is over, and they are gone from it, they are apt to say, Their Lips are their own : Who is Lord over us ? There are those who are yet more Disobedient and Rebellious ; for they will not so much as come to the place of Hearing. Others again will Hear and not Obey. And another sort are forgetful hearers of the Word.*

As when Jesus Discoursed of that *True Bread which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life unto the World ;* The Hearers thereupon said unto him, *Lord evermore give us this Bread, John 6. 32, 34.* So it is evermore the desire of my Soul ; and so it is of all Faithful and Knowing People, when we hear such an one is a good Minister, Preacher, or Teacher. *Lord evermore give us the Preaching and Teaching of thy Spirit.* For though the outward Teachers should be removed into a corner, *Isa. 30. 20,* Or if the lot of our Habitation is cast into a Barren Ground, where is a Dead Ministry or Dull Teaching ; yet the Spirit within us is Life ; and by this Spirit we know the Things that are freely given us of God. *For what Man knoweth the things of a Man, save the Spirit of a Man which is in him ? Even so the things of God knoweth no Man but the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2. 10.* Even so the Elect do know and discern more of the Things of God than other People, even by the Spirit which he hath given them. So they do now know and discern more of the Appearances and Doings of God unto the World and to his Church, then the mixt Multitude. *Shall the Lord do any thing, and not reveal the same unto his Servants the Prophets ?* So his Elect Servants do know and receive them for such, that is, for those to whom God doth communicate himself more then to his Ordinary Creatures ; when the same was not understood by the generality of



the People. There was never yet any true Prophet of the Lord, but who did approve, manifest and commend himself to the Hearts and Consciences of some of his Servants. And so it is, that whereas the common People in the Words of our Text, *Shall know*, that is, in the latter Days, and towards the end of Time, *That there hath been a Prophet among them*. The Elect Servants of God know the very same at the Time, and whilst the Prophet is among them.

Those Prophets were Ordinary or Extraordinary. By the Ordinary Prophets, I mean the common Priests who were to Read and Expound the Law. By the Extraordinary Prophets are to be understood such, whom God had *Anointed with the Oyl of Gladness above their fellows*. To whom he had made known more of himself then he had done unto the common Stock and Level of Mankind. The Denomination of the Word Prophet, comes chiefly from *Prophetare*; which signifies as much as to *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a Trumpet; and shew my people their Transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins*, Isa. 58. 1. And so every common Minister or Preacher of the Word, as he is Faithful and True in the Discharge of that part of the Office, may be called a Prophet both in the Old and New Testament Acceptation; as when we read of the *Schools of the Prophets*. *Is Saul also among the Prophets?* By this Word is denoted that distinct Rank of Men, such as are the Priests and Clergy among us at this Day. And so we read in the Gospel, *For ye may all prophesie one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the Spirits of the Prophets are Subject to the Prophets*, 1 Cor. 14, 31. 32. But as one Man now is seen to excell another in Strength, Greatness, Beauty, Wisdom, or such like according to the manifold Variety of the Creation and Workmanship of God; So the same everlasting God, the Creator of the ends the Earth, had also amongst them to whom he Communicated a greater measure of his Spirit and of the Knowledge of himself and of the things pertaining unto his Kingdom than unto others; as we read in the example of the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles.

Said



Said Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, *I must go and Preach the Gospel in other Cities, for thither am I sent.* And so the Prophets and Apostles were as *Captives removing to and fro*, Isa. 49. 21. And travelling from Place to Place for to Preach the Word of God and to make known his Truth. And as *Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets*: *She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates*; in the City *she uttereth her words*, Prov. 1. 20. So their Residence or Habitation for the most part was in or near the City of *Jerusalem*, the chief City of *Judea*, where the Palaces of their Kings, Rulers and chief of the People were. This I do the more willingly take notice of: because there have been some ignorant People in the Neighbourhood of the Place of my Nativity, who did therefore refuse to hear that part of the Word of the Lord which was committed to my Ministration, because they imagine or say, I am not long settled and settled in the countrey. O *Foolish People and Unwise!* Should any one therefore refuse to hear the Antient Prophets, or Christ in the Days of his Flesh, or the Apostles, because they did not always tarry in one place? Or refuse to hear the *Jewish Priests*, who were in their time *Worshippers of the Father*, and accepted with him, because both Priests and People did three times in the Year go up to *Jerusalem*. The right Practice and Inference from hence should be for People to hear such a one more gladly, and earnestly, and to lay hold of every Opportunity, letting none slip, because he is not always a Preacher among them. How Ridiculous and Nonsensical would this seem and appear, if People would not go to such Itinerant Judges for Justice; because forsooth they do not come and inhabit in the particular place of their abode. And it is a like Errour in Things pertaining to the future and endless Life, to refuse to receive *Knowledge at the Priests Lips*, Mal. 2. 7. Only because they do according to the especial Ordering and Appointment of God *Run to and fro*, Dan. 12. 4. For the *increase* thereof; and for the Publishing and communicating forth of the same. Said he, whose Example I desire to follow in this my Generation (for hereby *I shall have boldness in the Day of Judgment*, be-

because as he was, so are we in this present World) Wist ye not that I must be about my Fathers business? And so I speak unto ye my Country Men and Neighbours, Would ye not have me to be about my God and Creatours Business? What is that? Some of ye may be ready to think and say: Why To declare unto Jacob his Transgression, and to Israel his Sin. Micah. 3. 8. To bring Jacob again unto him, Isa. 49. 5. And to endeavour to gain one Point, that is, if I could be somewhat instrumental by his Blessing and Grace, and by the continued goings forth of his eternal Truth (*I will cry unto God most High, unto God that performeth all things for me*) to bring over the People of this Nation unto the obedience of one of his Commandments; for this would be an inlet and help, and it would make way by degrees, and in succession of Time to bring them over unto the Obedience of all the others.

I have often thought, that if it shall appear at the last Great Day of the Lord; when he shall write up the People, and Rehearse from the beginning of the World, all things as they were done, that I was a doing the Work of the Lord all along; as it seems to be according to his Word and Commandment now: *Thou shalt not have thy Brother in thine Heart, Thou shalt in any wise reprove thy Neighbour and not suffer Sin upon him, Lev. 19. 17. To teach Transgressors thy ways, and that sinners may be converted unto God, Psal. 51.* How will they (especially some of my nearest kindred according to the Flesh) be ashamed and confounded, who have opposed and reproached me; and yet much more will they be ashamed and confounded, who have Oppressed, Persecuted and Imprisoned me. Then the lying lips will be put to silence, which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the Righteous, Psal. 31. 18. And they will wish that those Hands had been before that cut off, which have acted cruel and tormenting things against me. And they who did not hear, but they did forbear (*for they are a rebellious House*) yet now shall know that there hath been a Prophet among them. That is, one who did faithfully and truly declare and tell them of their Transgression and Sin. One who neither had, nor yet did pretend to have extraordinary Assistances or Measures of the Spirit, nor yet

yet more knowledge than others of his Generation. But as Paul saith, *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the Ministry,* 2 Tim. 1. 12. And *He that is faithful in the least, is also faithful in much.* So according to that Ability and Knowledge God had given me as his Creature, I have the Testimony of mine own Conscience ; That I did endeavour all along to be faithful for the most part, even to handle his Word *According to the integrity of my heart, and the skilfulness of my hands,* Ps. 78. 72. And I would Not *hide his Righteousness, nor conceal his Truth,* Psal. 40. 10. Which arose and he made known in my Heart ; Though when he *Who gave authority to his Servants, and to every Man his work, and commanded the Porter to watch,* Mark 13. 34. Shall call me to an Account about this particular Work he had allotted and set out to me ; for it is here said, *That he gave to every Man his work.* Herein I shall give up such like an Account, That as it was managed by me, it was accompanied with several Failures and Imperfections : Yet nevertheless, this will be some joy and lessening of the other Grief ; that however I did endeavour to get it done and finished ; thinking it better to have it done any way then not at all. *The Lord opened mine ears and I was not rebellious :* Which will be some hope and comfort in that Day. I ought *To have feared no more, nor be dismayed, neither be lacking.* Jer. 23. 4.

In the last great Day of Judgment, *The Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy ; and will cause him to come near unto him ; even him whom he hath chosen, will he cause to come near unto him,* Numb. 16. 5. At that Great Day of Decision, all Things that are written in the Scriptures concerning his Church and People, and concerning his doings towards the Children of Men, will be fulfilled and laid open : Then shall be known what Prophets have been in the several Generations and Countries. The Lord will recount his *Worthies* and bring them forth by their Names, who were for *Signs and Witnesses to his People.* Then also those Things which are now in the Dark, and which People are in doubt and question whether there is any thing of God in it, will be brought to open  
Light ;

Light. And then God, who is judge himself, will speak and testify, Psal. 50. 6, 7. How He, even He himself was concerned therein; and he will make all his Churches, yea, even all his Reasonable Creatures know that he *was* God, even their God; and consequently they should have received him for their Lord and Governour.

Many more things might here be spoken as touching this, but for the more full Declaration of them, we refer you to the Hearing of that Day: Both as pertaining how the Case stands between God and all Mankind in the general; and also as to every Individual and Particular Soul. For *He who hath Created these things, that bringeth out their Host by number, he calleth them all by Names, not one faileth*, will not pass over nor let slip so much as one Man or Woman without Examination and Retribution, when the Great Day of his Judgment is come. Whose Providence is over the least Things even Sparrows, and the Hairs of our Head, He will *Bring every secret thing into Judgment; and we must receive for the Deeds done in the Body, whether they be good or bad.*

For we shall certainly be called into question for this Day, and so of every Days Actions, after that we are come to the Years of Discretion, and have the knowledge of Good and Evil. I shall give Account of my Preaching and Ministry, and so the People will of their hearing and profiting thereby; As also, they who refuse to hear, who *Contemn Gods Word and Commandment*, will be called to an Account: *Even those who now forbear and are Rebellious*, shall know, and in the latter Days they shall consider it perfectly, whether they would or not, that there hath been a Prophet among them. I pray God to convince and make it known unto the Inhabitants of this Nation, That they may be Wise and Discerning in Time, before it is too late; and that they may know and come to hear the *Things that belong to their peace, before they are hid from their Eyes.*

So much may serve for Explanation and Paraphrase of our Text, and to illustrate the Truth thereof: Now let us improve the same in some few Practical Uses and Inferences.



In the First place, Seeing that these things are so ; Hereby may be perceived the exceeding Benefit and Advantage of a knowing and discerning Spirit. It is Recorded of *Iffachar*, That he was *Discerning in the Times and Seasons*, that he might know what *Israel* had to do. This is written for our Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come : To the intent that we also should be discerning not so much in the Times and Seasons as in the latter and last end of things ; that we may know what we have to do, in this mean while in the Time of our Probation and Trial ; and how we may demean our selves in these Days of our Flesh ; wherein God doth prove us whether we will keep his Commandments or no. For truly if we did now so know and discern of the latter and last end of Things, as indeed we ought and may know of the latter and last end of Things, and we shall be at last forced to it, when the *End is come* : Hereby a great deal of Sin and Evil would be avoided and prevented in the mean while ; as also much Good and Duty might be done, which now through ignorance and want of discerning, is left undone. *Eschew Evil and do Good* is all that God doth require of Man ; and the more any one doth eschew Evil and do Good in the several instances thereof, it will be so much the better for that Man or Woman throughout all Eternity. And according as the Knowledge and Faith of People is, so they do one or the other. *If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them*, Said our Lord to his Disciples. Nay, if one did fully know such and such Things, and consider thoroughly all the Reasons that persuade to it, there also he would do them ; as we find in the Things of Daily Use and Experience. For almost all Sin doth proceed and arise from want of Knowledge. As for instance, The Sin of Unbelief doth arise from want of the Knowledge of the Power of God, what he can do ; *As if any thing were too hard for the Lord*, which nothing is. Had *Zacharias* at that very Time known that those Things he was told of *Luke* 1 20. would indeed be performed, he had not been struck Dumb for his unbelief. And so the Sin of Distrust doth arise from want of the Knowledge of the Will of God, even what God will do. And so  
when



when any one falls into a Sin, through such a foregoing Temptation, it is for want of a true and through Knowledge; for such suppose and imagine, that there is more good in the Temptation, then really there is. It is commonly said, *That if we did know before, what would come after, we should never do amiss.* Which is most true, as to the Things pertaining to God, and to our own future State and Condition: As to which, we should never finally miscarry, if we would receive into our Knowledge, all that God and Christ hath told us before concerning it. Our Creatour hath done his part; for he hath made us as Angels of God, capable to know Things before hand; and also capable to *Choose the good, and refuse the evil.* But this is the degeneracy of Mankind: This is their fault now, and will be their Condemnation hereafter; That when they were *Made in Honour*, yet themselves should wilfully become *Of no Understanding*, but like the Beasts that Perish. That is, to be only for present and sensible Things, but not to regard the Future and Spiritual, which chiefly belong to Man to Mind; because they are his greatest concern. Saith the Wise Man, *Moreover that the Heart be without Knowledge, it is not good!* Nay, it is stark naught; for such being Blinded will insensibly slide into the Ditch of Destruction. As to those who shall finally and eternally Perish at the last Day, The Return will be made, and the Reason will be Assigned, *My People are destroyed for lack of Knowledge,* Hof. 4. 6. Which will hold true as to that everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his Power. It is not without very good Reason, That the Duty of Knowledge is so very much inculcated and recommended in Scripture, which was given to make us wise unto Salvation. *Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy Commandments,* Psal. 119. 66. To the same purpose is *Prov. 1* throughout. The neglect of Knowledge is threatned and condemned *Isa. 1. 3. Et. 5. 13. Et. 27. 11. Ps. 32. 9. Jude. 10. Prov. 27. 22. Jer. 8. 6. Ps. 14. 4. Eph. 4. 18. Ps. 82. 5. Ps. 92. 6. 2 Pet. 2. 5.* In a Word, it is a very great Good, and will be a great Gain to have the knowledge of the Things of God, but chiefly of those things that are to come, as well as of the Things

Things present. So it is a great evil, and will be a great loss to be found without this Knowledge.

*Secondly*, By what hath been aforesaid from the Words of our Text, may be perceived the much yet greater excellency and preciousness of the Grace of FAITH. Saith Paul, *Though I have all Knowledge, and though I have all Faith*, 1 Cor 13. 2. Hereby may be seen that Faith is distinct from, and doth properly succeed and follow after Knowledge : So that we are right enough in making it our second Use and Application. The Object of Faith is future and invisible Things, according to Heb. 11. 1. But the Object of Knowledge is present and visible Things. Now Faith is the Principle and Foundation, the Sum and Substance, the Marrow and Kernel, the very Vitals and Inwards of all Religion. For first of all Faith fixes and terminates on the unseen God, who made all things, both visible and invisible ; both Things present, and Things to come. But then besides, we are Creatures that are continually passing on ; we being here in a transitory Life, and in a transitory State. And we hast on, and continually make towards those greater and more abiding Things to come. Now as Faith doth discover, apprehend, and lay hold of all these things, it thereupon becomes to us all in all. Saith Jesus Christ, *Have Faith in God*, Mark 11. 22. And it being elsewhere said, *The just shall live by his Faith*. So that I would chiefly recommend and put my Readers in mind, to have Faith in God, and live by Faith. That as the Apostle saith, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God*. Even so, do ye live by Faith, and be full of Faith, and of the Holy Ghost ; that whether ye Sleep or Wake, whether ye be busy or idle, whether ye be in your Shops, Barns, Houses or Fields, whether ye be upon a Journey, or sitting still ; Nay, even whilst ye are eating your necessary Food, or not eating, in whatsoever Posture or Action ye are in, let your Hearts be always musing and thinking, and be full with expectation, *And looking after those things which are coming on the Earth*, Luke 21. 26. And shortly after that we depart hence, will be manifested before us with open Face. For the Divisions of Reuben, there was great thought and searching

*searching of heart.* So after the iuvifible and future things of God, which pertain to us Men, let there be continued Thought and searching of Heart ; *To give all diligence to make our Calling and Election sure.* Let this be all your Labour and Care: And as ye always Breath, and your Pulse is continually beating; so let your doings and movings be towards and in Subordination and tendency, to this great end, how to secure and lay hold on the better Things for your Portion. Thus to have *Faith in God*, and to *Live by Faith*, is indeed the way to be *Carried from Eaith unto Saluation.*

The Third Practical Use and Inference is, To teach every one of us to be of an Obedient, Humble, Lowly and Trembling Spirit. It hath been aforesaid, that the wicked, Ungodly and Disobedient, would fain have the Commandments of God be fashioned according to their imaginations and Lusts; and when they have indeed Sinned, they would so make a shew, as if they had not sinned; or as if the Commandments of God were not so as they are Recorded in his Book, and delivered by his faithful Ministers. I have Read among the sayings of *Luther*; *That nothing displeaseth God more than when we Defend and Cloak our Sins, and will not acknowledge that we have done wrong, as did Saul.* For this is *Adding Sin to Sin*, and a linking one Transgression on to another. That is, when such have Sinned or Transgressed, *In speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the Heart words of falshood*, Isa. 59. 13. To vindicate themselves; and it is a Persisting still in their Stubbornness, Disobedience and Rebellion; which instead of lessening doth aggravate and increase their Guilt, and it doth provoke God more and more. By that manner of speech, *Conceiving and uttering from the Heart words of falshood*, Is meant and intended, when People will of set purpose invent and speak lies and words of Falshood at the very same time when they know it to be so, only to cloak and excuse their foregoing Sins. But all this, both the lying false Spirit; as also the Perverse, Disobedient, Rebellious and Refractory Spirit is far from the Godly; as we may know by the Examples of *David* and *Hezekiah*.

By the way, though a parcel of ignorant People or Men pleasers, who are Corrupted by *filthy lucre*, do imagine or say, *That a King or Rich Man, ought not to be Reproved*: Yet we learn and know the contrary from the Word of God, that they both may, and also they ought to be Reproved, if they commit Sin or Evil, all one as inferiour People. We may Read in 2 *Sam.* 12. That when *Nathan* Reproved *David*, he did not imprison *Nathan* for it, as *Amaziah* and other Ungodly Kings would sometimes do unto the Prophets of the Lord; but he acknowledged his Offence. And *David* said unto *Nathan*, *I have sinned against the Lord*. And so when *Isaiah* denounced that sad Message to *Hezekiah* and his Posterity, What is the Return and Answer which *Hezekiah* made thereupon? Then said *Hezekiah* to *Isaiah*, *Good is the Word of the Lord which thou hast spoken*, *Isa.* 39. 8. Both *David* and *Hezekiah* were Servants of the Lord, who were overtaken with a fault; but yet they are for our Example and Instruction, how we should behave our selves under the Reproof of the Word, either in the publick Preaching and Ministry thereof; or when we are Rebuked privately, as one Man doth his Neighbour. Namely, not to Rankle in Spirit, nor conceive Enmity and Hatred against the outward Person of him that doth it; like *Ahab* to *Micaiah* *I hate this Man, for he Prophesieth not good concerning me, but evil*. Not to kick against the Reproof, because it pricks the Conscience; in which sense, notwithstanding people harden themselves now in the mean while, yet hereafter it will be found true, *It is hard to kick against the pricks*. Nor yet should any one dare to Reply against God, *Rom* 9, 20. Nor yet as it is in the Marginal Reading there, to Answer again; for this is a sign of a Malapert and Saucy Servant. But as the one is to give, so the other ought to receive the Reproof *In the Spirit of meekness*, and to acknowledge that he hath Transgressed against the Lord his God, and that he hath not obeyed his voice, *Jer.* 3. 13. But now he is heartily sorry for it, and unfeignedly resolves to mend his fault, and do so no more.

The end and Requiring of the Law, is Obedience: And this is the way when we have not performed that, to make it up and supply it, so as to render and yield it  
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for the time to come. All that God doth require of us, and the only way to please and be reconciled unto him, is to obey his Word, to have a great fear and dread of the invisible God in our inward Parts, and a care not to offend him, and to express forth whatever Honour and Reverence we possibly can towards him. For though when we are full and in Health, Youth and Strength, we are apt to despise him, and say in our Heart, tush God we care not for thee: Yet on the other hand when we are in Hunger, Want, Cold, Affliction or Pain, and more especially when Old Age begins to creep on, when *the Floods come, and the Winds blow and beat upon this house* of our Body; when Dangerous and Tormenting Diseases are upon us, and grim Death approaches nigh to Arrest and Carry our Souls into another place, then we know and are indeed sensible, that as God doth Good, so he can also Punish and make the Creature really Miserable. As when we are Hungry or Cold, or Sick, we would willingly do those things, and use those means to be full and satisfied, and warm, and well again. So we being *By Nature Children of Wrath*, and liable unto Misery and Destruction, which will at length certainly come upon us, unless in God is our help, in God is our Salvation, Life and Happiness; so that from hence the Word of Exhortation doth arise and run most forcible, to actually persuade us to do those things, and *so to walk that we may please God* that he may do these great and good Things on our behalf; Namely, that when Death hath done its worst and utmost upon us, he may raise us up again, and give us the *Blessing which the Lord hath commanded, even Life for evermore*. That he *Who hath filled the Hungry with good things*, would fill our Hungry Souls with satisfaction. *I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness*, Psal. 17. 15. There is all contained in this Word *Satisfied*: what we can think of or desire, or would have; for then it will be returned to our unspeakable rejoycing: Now it is as we would have it. *What Man is he that desireth Life, and loveth many Days that he may see good?* Psal. 34. 11. So the question may be a little reversed and altered, *What Man*



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As for the other Branch of this our Third Use and Application; Namely, That we should be of an Humble, Lowly and Trembling Spirit: It is a part of and comprehended under Obedience to those Commands of our God, *What doth the Lord require of thee, but to walk humbly with thy God,* Micah. 6. 8. *Serve the Lord with fear and joyce with Trembling,* Psal. 2. 11. Verily, verily, we poor mortal Creatures can never be in too low and humble a State; neither can we have too mean an Opinion and Conceit of our selves. *For verily every Man at his best State; is altogether vanity,* Selah, Psal. 39. 5. There is the Ratification and Confirmation of it. And as every one of us at our best State are altogether Vanity; even so we should know and be sensible of as much our selves, as to lay it deeply to Heart. *Humble your selves in the sight of God, and he shall lift you up,* James 4. 10. Confess your selves as nothing and altogether unworthy and unprofitable. Then it was when David was *Little in his own sight.* That God exalted him to be King over all Israel; and what was Ten Thousand better he gave unto him his holy Spirit, and the Spirit of God spake by him, and his word was in his tongue. But he hath more Grace, Wherefore he saith, *God resisteth the Proud, and giveth grace to the Humble.* Here if they would be still Humble therewith, and use it well, he would increase even that *More Grace*; for he would give exceeding Gifts unto Men; if they would remain still Low and *Little in their own sight.* But if once they are *lifted up,* then he binders, or witholds, or takes away the Qualifications wherein they boast, or some way defeats and spoils them that no Creature should glory in his Presence. My self am a sad Example and Warning of this, for *I speak this to my shame.* I have perceived from within my self,

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drawings of God upon the account of my Spiritual Pride and Affectations of gentility and such like. It is my present Testimony, and I declare it of mine own miserable Experience; for hereby I shall lose so much of that *Full Reward* which I might have had for all Eternity, if I had all along remained *Little in mine own sight*, and such as a Creature should be. Take heed and beware of Pride, and of the least giving way unto the lifting up of Mind: I mean that which no Man seeth, but it is known only between God and thine own Conscience. As afore said; No Man can be too Low and Humble. So here it is, No Man can keep too far off from Pride, so as not to give way unto the Thoughts and Dictates thereof in the least, it being a deadly and dangerous Evil.

And then for what belongs to this (for fear and humility commonly go together) that we should always be in a fearful and trembling State, according to what *Paul* saith, *And I was with you in Weakness, in Fear, and in much Trembling*, 1 Cor. 2. 3. It is Observed, That in very Cold weather, how little and contracted we are within our selves: When we are Cold or Hungry, or in Pain, or in Affliction, then commonly we least stand upon, and do not care for, nor value the nicities of Pride. But we are Humble, viz, such as frail and miserable Creatures should be: Even so for the very same Reason, we should *Pass the time of our sojourning here in fear*. For the most Brittle Glass is not more subject and liable to be broken then we are in all times and places subject to Destruction and Misery. For what is our Life? It is even as a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. It is but a puff of Breath in our Nostrils; And what is more fluid and uncertain then that? Suppose a Man were to tread on a Rope an Hundred Yards high, from which if he should fall, he would certainly break his Neck: or suppose we were to pass over a wide River or deep Pit on a Bridge, no broader than just the Soles of our Feet: and we had nothing at all to hold by, How carefully and fearfully should we walk thereon? So is our Case and Condition in the Body, and in this Life. For though the Eye of Sense seeth it not, yet the Eye of Faith, and the Eyes of our Understanding being enlightened do

do discern and know, That we are as yet (it is but for a very little while) kept from the dreadful Things of the invisible World, only by this thin vail of Flesh which we carry about us. We are but for a very short respite preserved from drowning by this tottering and ruinous Ark of the Body, which will not preserve us always. Now if a poor Creature was to swim for his Life, he would not be without fear in the midst of his Swimming, if he hath any sense or apprehension of his Danger; And if he hath no sense nor apprehension of his Danger, then he will be certainly Drowned and Perish. Just so is the Condition of all People in this World. *We are by Nature the Children of Wrath, as well as others.* And as such, *Death and Hell followed with him,* Rev. 6. 8. Like a cruel and devouring Dog, doth run after and pursue us. So that the same Word which the Angel spake unto Lot, doth belong to every one of us, *Arise and escape for thy Life.* And truly, unless we do arise and escape for our Life, and unless we are warned (as the Preaching and Ministry of the Word gives the warning, and unless we take the warning, which the Obedience to the same word doth. As it is written, *By Faith Noah being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, prepared an Ark to the Saving of his House,* Heb. 11. 7. But if it were not for this, we should certainly fall into the Damnation of Hell. And those People, who like Brutes Beasts go blindfold through the vale of this Life, without any sense, apprehension or fear of the Damnation of Hell, they will more certainly fall into it. The Reason why any are so fearless and unconcerned as to this (as too many are) is because they see it not. But if Hell Fire was evidently *set forth before their Eyes*; They would be at their wits ends, and think they could never get far enough off from so terrible a thing. Even as Lot did arise and escape for his Life to avoid the Flames of Sodom and Gomorrah; So where they see it by Faith, will reasonable people arise and escape for their Life, to avoid the Fire and Damnation of Hell; all one as we now see they do whatever they can to run from an Inundation of Water, or from the Sword of a devouring Enemy. In this last Instance, when people fly from

the Sword, from the drawn Sword and from the greivousness of War, Are they then without fear? In no wise, unless they shut their Eyes, or are stupid; and then such are soonest knocked on the Head. Even so again it is here, *The last Enemy* Death dogs us at our heels: And as it is said in the Book of Revelations, *Hell follows with him*. And can then people live without fear? And yet for all they who live most without fear of Hell, will soonest fall into it. I have read of *Damocles* sitting at a Table feeding upon Dainties and good Chear, but directly over his Head there did hang a drawn Sword by a single and weak Thread. Such an one as long as he did not see it, might be without fear; but if he did look up and behold it, then he can be no longer heartily and really merry, *No more then Belshazzar could when he saw the hand writing upon the Wall*. In like manner, *The Wrath of God* (which in Scripture is called the Sword of the Lord) is revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness of Men; and it hangs directly over all the Children of Disobedience, and all the Sinners and Transgressours of the Earth, by the single Thread of their uncertain Lives. For this same Wrath of God will be really executed upon and sensibly felt by them after that their Breath is gone out of their Nostrils, and their Souls are departed from their Bodies. How then can any *Live in pleasure upon the Earth, and be wanton, and nourish their hearts as in a day of Slaughter?* Unless to compleat the Paralel in this also; Herein they become *Like the Beasts that Perish*, As to be quite insensible and ignorant thereof. Alas! Notwithstanding the Brute Beasts are thus insensible and ignorant in the mean while, they must at length come to the shambles, and then they smell Blood, and they would fain not go, but they are pushed in. Even so those who by multitudes are going on in the way to Death and Hell, when they come near to the first, then they begin to know and are sensible of the other also; but then it is too late, *And the door was shut*, Mat. 25. 16. Time past cannot be recalled in a Thought; neither will a Desire at the last gasp be accepted for a godly and well spent Life.

They who in the midst of Life and Health, go on securely without the fear of God, and of his Threatnings, and in unmindfulness of their Latter End : Even these will not be without fear when the Time is come that they must Die : But the Soul will indeed Shiver and Tremble, as She is taking her flight forth into the invisible World. Or if she should be hardened and rendered insensible through a foregoing *Deadness in Trespases and Sins* ; or through Bodily Pain and Sickness, which take up and employ all her Faculties at that time ; yet after she is actually dissolved from this Tabernacle of Clay, then if she is loaden with Sin and Guilt, will succeed *A certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation which shall devour the Adversaries*, Heb. 10. 27. For in the World to come there is no hardening against God, or the fence of his Judgments. Therein the *Devils believe and tremble*.

All people must and will fear one time or another. But as the Wise Man saith, *Happy is he that feareth always* ; who fears most in this World that he may fear least in the World to come. For from this kind of fear, that is, a fear of God, and a fear to Sin against him, doth proceed a good Conscience ; thence is no fear, that is slavish or hath torment. Then comes *Perfect love which casteth out fear*. But as it is written, *When the Sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and lo an horror of great darkness fell upon him*. So now the Sun of our Life is going down ; let it be both our Desire and Prayer, and also Endeavour, that a Filial and Reverential fear, a great Aw and Dread of the invisible Lord God may fall, and always remain upon our Souls and Spirits. That for these very few (now they are fewer then ever they were yet) remaining Days of our Pilgrimage we may *Walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the Comfort of the holy Ghost*, against the time comes when we are to fall severally *Asleep in the Lord Jesus* ; and from thence ever to awake after his likeness.

It hath been fulfilled already as to the Inhabitants of this Nation and Generation. The same is now fulfilling whilst I am Publishing these things ; and it will be yet fulfilled as to their future kind of behaviour towards  
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my Ministry, (For all will not believe; though a Man declare it to them.) whilst I go in and out amongst them. But especially it will be more evidently, clearly and illustriously fulfilled after that we are all departed off from this Earth, (*Behold I have told you before*) And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (Why do not some hear, and others forbear) For they are a *Rebellious House*. Notwithstanding now they call themselves Christians; but as *All are not Israel, who are of Israel*, Rom. 9. 6. So all are not Christians at this Day, who hold fast the Name thereof; Yet They shall know that there hath been a Preacher among them, who hath Preached the Words of God and of eternal Life.

Consider what hath been said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

So Witnesseth *RICHARD STAFFORD* a Scribe instructed in the Law of GOD, and in the Gospel of *JESUS CHRIST*.

As *Paul* was in the City of *Jerusalem* brought up at the Feet of *Gamaliel*; So I was for the space of Six Years Educated at *Magdalen Hall* in *Oxford*.

## F I N I S.

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L O N D O N.

Printed in the Year, 1700. And are to be Sold unto such who Will receive the Love of the Truth that they might be saved, 2 Thes. 2. 10. And who will Consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance to the Lord of the whole Earth, Micah. 4. 13. and towards the outward labours and charge of Making known his Truth. 38. 19.

*Practical*